
Trying To Use Words

Editorial Preface

The following selection of essays by David Myatt are from his post-2009 but pre-2012 writings ¹ about 'the numinous way' he was then in the process of developing to explain both his 'change of perspective' and that weltanschauung. ²

During 2011 and 2012 he refined that 'numinous way' into his philosophy of pathei-mathos, as he subsequently explained:

"Given that the essence of The Numinous Way is individual empathy, an individual understanding, the development of an individual judgement, and the living of an ethical way of life where there is an appreciation of the numinous, the more I reflected upon this 'numinous way' between 2011 and Spring 2012, the more I not only realized my mistakes, but also that it was necessary to remove, to excise, the detritus that had accumulated around the basic insights and the personal pathei-mathos that inspired me to develop that 'numinous way'. Mistakes and detritus because for some time, during the development of that 'numinous way', I was still in thrall to some abstractions, still thinking in terms of categories and opposites, and still fond of pontificating and generalizing, especially about The State.

I therefore began to re-express, in a more philosophical manner, the personal, the individual, the ontological, the ethical and spiritual nature, of The Numinous Way, and thus emphasized the virtues of humility, love, and of wu-wei - of balance, of tolerance, of non-interference, of individual interior (spiritual) reformation, of non-striving, of admitting one's own uncertainty of understanding and of knowing. The year-long [2011-2012] process of refinement, correction, and reflexion resulted in me re-naming what remained of my 'numinous way' the philosophy of pathei-mathos." <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/rejecting-extremism/development-of-the-numinous-way/>

These early essays are therefore interesting in the context of not only that 'numinous way' but also of how a philosopher develops their insights. As Myatt expressed it in *A Change of Perspective* - the first essay included here - written in 2010:

to paraphrase TS Eliot, here I am now, in the middle way I have devised for myself, having had many years, often wasted, the years between two wars within myself: "Trying to use words, and every attempt is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure."

Rachael Stirling
2023

1. I have used the original formatting of the essays and updated two dead URL's.
2. Since Myatt, post-2009 to the present, uses various terms from Ancient Greek literature and philosophy to explain his meaning readers might find his *Glossary of Terms and Greek Words* in the seventh (2022) edition of his *The Numinous Way Of Pathei-Mathos* useful: <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf>

A Change of Perspective

Over the past decade there has been, for me, a complete change of perspective, for I have gone from upholding and violently propagating the racialism of National-Socialism – and encouraging the overthrow of the existing *status quo* through revolutionary insurrection – to the acceptance of empathy and compassion, and to that gentle, quiet, desire to cease to cause suffering, which form the basis for what I have called The Numinous Way, with this Numinous Way being apolitical, undogmatic, and considering both race and "the folk" as unethical abstractions which move us away from empathy and compassion and which thus obscure our true human nature.

Why unethical? Because The Numinous Way uncovers, through empathy, the nexus we, as individuals, are to all life, thus making us aware of how all life – sentient and otherwise – is connected and part of that matrix, that Unity, which is the Cosmos, and it is a knowing and appreciation of this connexion which is lost when we impose abstractions upon life, and especially when we judge other beings by a criteria established by some such abstraction. For this knowing and appreciation of our connexion to other life is the beginning of compassion, and a presencing – a manifestation – of our humanity, of our knowing of ourselves in relation to other life, and the Cosmos itself; and, thus, a placing of us, as individuals, in an ethical, and a Cosmic, perspective.

This change of my perspective – this personal change in me – arose, or derived, from several things: from involvement with and belief in, during the past decade, a certain Way of Life, considered by many to be a religion; from thinking deeply about certain ethical questions whose genesis was reflecting upon my thirty years of violent political activism; and from a variety of personal events and experiences, two of which events involved the loss of loved ones, and one of which loss involved the suicide of my fiancée.

However, this change was a slow, often difficult, process, and there was to be, during this decade, a stubborn refusal,

by me, to follow – except for short periods – where this change led me; a stubborn refusal to-be, except for short periods, the person I was shown to be, should-be, by and through this alchemical process of inner change. Thus was there a stubborn clinging to doing what I conceived to be my honourable duty, and it is only in the last month that I have finally and to my own satisfaction resolved, in an ethical way, the dilemma of such a duty, thus ending my association with a particular Way of Life, which Way many consider a religion. (1)

During this decade of inner reflexion, of great outward change – of lifestyle, occupation, belief, place of dwelling – there was a quite slow rediscovery of the individual I had been before my fanatical pursuit of a political cause became the priority of my life: the person behind the various rôles played or assumed, over more than three decades, for the purpose of attaining particular outer goals deriving from some abstraction, some ideal, or some other impersonal thing. That is, I gradually, over the past decade, ceased believing in a certain principle which I had formerly accepted; which principle I had placed before my own personal feelings; which principle I had used, quite deliberately, to change myself; and which principle I had stubbornly adhered to for almost four decades, believing that it was my honourable duty to do so.

This principle was that in order to attain one's "ideal world", certain sacrifices had to be made "for the greater good". In accord with this principle, I considered I had certain duties, and accordingly sacrificed not only my own, personal, happiness, but also that of others, including that of four women who loved me; and it is perhaps fair to conclude that it was this principle which made me seem to others to be, for three decades, a political fanatic, and – for many years after that – a kind of religious zealot. Indeed, it is probably even fairer to conclude that I was indeed such a fanatic and such a zealot, for, in the pursuit of some abstraction, some ideal, some notion of duty, some dogma, I deliberately controlled my own nature, a nature evident – over the decades – in my poetry; in my wanderings as a vagabond; in my initial enthusiasm as a Christian monk; in the tears cried upon hearing some sublime piece of music; in my love of Nature, and of women. That is, there were always times in my life when I reverted back to being the person I felt, I knew, I was; always times when I stopped, for a few months, or a year or maybe longer, interfering in the world; when I ceased to place a perceived duty before myself, and when I thus interacted with others, with the world, only in a direct, personal, empathic way *sans* some ideal, some dogma.

Now, I have finally come to understand that this principle of idealism, the guiding principle of most of my adult life, is unethical, and therefore fundamentally wrong and inhuman. That is, it is a manufactured abstraction (2); a great cause of suffering, and that nothing – no idealism, no cause, no ideal, no dogma, no perceived duty – is worth or justifies the suffering of any living-being, sentient or otherwise. That it is empathy, compassion and a personal love which are human, the essence of our humanity: not some abstract notion of duty; not some idealism. That it is the impersonal interference in the affairs of others – based on some cause, some belief, some dogma, some perceived duty, some ideology, some creed, some ideal, some manufactured abstraction – which causes and greatly contributes to suffering, and which moves us far away from empathy and compassion and thus diverts us from our humanity and from changing ourselves, in a quiet way, into a more evolved, a more empathic and more compassionate, human being.

Thus, in many ways, The Numinous Way – as now developed, and as explicated by me in the past year or so (3) – represents my true nature: the hard, difficult, re-discovery of what I had controlled, and lost; and, perhaps more importantly, an evolution of that personal nature as a result of my diverse experiences, my learning from my mistakes, and my empathic awareness of the suffering I have caused to others.

Hence, I have been, for many decades, wrong; misguided. Or, rather, I misguided myself, allowing idealism and a perceived duty to triumph over, to veil, my humanity. My good intentions were no excuse, even though, for nearly four decades, I made them an excuse, as idealists always do. For, during all the decades of my various involvements – of my arrogant interference based on some abstraction – I sincerely believed I was doing what was "right", or "honourable", and that such suffering as I caused, or aided, or incited, was "necessary" for some ideal to be born in some "future".

But now my inescapable reality is that of a personal empathy, a personal compassion, a simple, quiet, letting-be; a knowing that such answers as I have, now, are just my answers, and that I have no duty other than to be human, to gently strive to be a better human being through reforming myself by quietly cultivating empathy and compassion. Of course, I do not expect to be understood, and probably will continue to be judged, by others, according to some, or all, of my former beliefs, involvements.

So I rest – tired, awake, exhausted, from days of work,
Worry, Dreams, and Thought
Resting while the hot Sun flows
And the fastly flowing nebulae of clouds, wind-spaked,
Grow tendrils to shape themselves with faces
Here:
One planet gasping as it gasps
Since the slaying by Homo Hubris never ever seems
To stop.

Too late the empathy to set us flowing
Back to love?
So much promise for so long undesired
I am left sad, warm, sleepy
While the Summer Sun brings peace enough
To sleep-me

As the circling Buzzard
Cries.

So There Is Warm Sun

DW Myatt

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Footnotes:

1) For almost four years – since Francine's suicide – I struggled with this dilemma of honour and duty, believing that it was my honourable duty to stubbornly adhere to the particular Way of Life I had embraced in the previous decade; and stubbornly adhere despite the conclusions of my own thinking regarding compassion and empathy, manifest as these conclusions were in the ethical, and non-racialist, Numinous Way that I had continued to develop. Thus did I during this period, and several times, publicly and in private re-affirm my commitment to that particular Way of Life, striving hard to forget my own answers, born from my thinking, my experiences, and especially from that personal tragedy, for surely these things were only a test, a trial, of my belief, my honour? Was it not therefore my duty to just humbly submit to **الله**, to thus acknowledge that my own thinking, my own conclusions based on experience, were flawed, the product of error and pride?

But, to paraphrase TS Eliot, here I am now, in the middle way I have devised for myself, having had many years, often wasted, the years between two wars within myself

Trying to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure

Thus, I have declared a still rather shaky new truce, a compromise: based on a treaty where I have (re)defined personal honour as a practical manifestation of empathy, of the desire to cease to cause suffering to living-beings, with such empathy and the compassion deriving from it a guide to living that awareness of ourselves as but one nexion to all Life and to the Cosmos, and which awareness, which Cosmic perspective, expresses both our true human nature and the potential we possess to change ourselves into higher, more evolved, beings.

I would like to believe that this new truce I have manufactured will hold, but I have believed that before, and been mistaken, and even now it occurs to me that my theory of ethics, my new definition of honour, is just that: *mine*, and that I may be wrong. Yet my experiences – my feeling for, my empathy with, the numinous (manifest for instance in sublime music or in a mutual personal love) – tell me I can only live what I feel, I know, I empathize with, and this now is presented in my developed Numinous Way.

2) Regarding abstractions – and how *The Numinous Way* understands them – see, for example, the essays *A Brief Analysis of The Immorality of Abstraction* and *An Overview of The Numinous Way of Life*.

3) See my revised essays, collected in a pdf document, under the title *The Numinous Way: Empathy, Compassion, and Honour*. This was first issued in the Spring of last year, since when I have written a few additional articles, such as *The Prejudice of Abstractions*.

Source:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20101228063658/http://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/change-of-perspective/>

The Numinous Foundations of Human Culture

In your recently published autobiography, Myngath, you wrote that, and I quote – "a shared, a loyal, love between two people is the most beautiful, the most numinous, the most valuable thing of all." Is that how you now feel about life?

Certainly. I have now reached the age when there seems to be a natural tendency to reflect on the past – to recall to one's consciousness happy, treasured, moments from decades past, bringing as such recollections seem to do some understanding of what is important, precious, about life, about our mortal human existence.

One remembers – for instance – those tender moments of one's child growing in the first years of their life – the moment of first walking, the first words, the time they feel asleep in your arms on that day when warm Sun and their joyful discovery of sand and sea finally wore them out... Or the tender moments of a love, shared, with another human being; perhaps evoked again by some scent (of a flower, perhaps) or by those not quite dreaming-moments before one falls asleep at night, or, as sometimes occurs with people of my age, in the afternoon after lunch or following that extra glass of wine to which we treat ourselves.

It is as if – and if we allow ourselves – we become almost as children again, but with the memories, the ability, to

appreciate the time, the effort, the love, the tenderness, and often the sacrifice, that our own parents showed and gave to us but which we never really appreciated then in those moments of their giving. As if we wish we could be back there, then, with this our ageful understanding – back there, full of youth and unhampered by the ageing body which now seems to so constrain us. Thus, are we as if that, this, is all we are or have to give: this, our understanding, our now poignant understanding; this – perhaps a smile, a gesture, a look, a word, or those tears we might cry, silently, softly, when we are alone, remembering. Tears of both sadness and of joy; of memories and of hopes. Hopes that someone, somewhere, at some time, might by our remembering be infused, if only a little, with that purity of life which such ageing recollections seem to so exquisitely capture.

That purity which becomes so expressed, so manifest, if one watches – for example – a young loving mother cradling her baby. Look at her eyes, her face, the way she holds her hands. There is such a gentle love there; such a gentle love that artists should really try and capture again and again in music, in painting, in moving images, in words, in sculpture. And capture again and again so that their Art reminds us of that so very human quality, that so very fragile quality, which enables us – each, another separate human being – to be so gently aware of another person, and thus able for ourselves, if only for an instant, to feel that gentleness, that tenderness, in another. This tenderness, this love, should be captured and expressed again and again because such love is one of the foundations of human culture, and something we so often, especially we men, are so prone to forget when we allow ourselves to become subsumed with some abstraction, some idealistic notion of duty, or some personal often selfish emotion.

Thus are we reminded of the value, the importance, of human love, and the need for us to be empathic beings – to have and to develop our empathy so that we can shed our selfish self and the illusion of our separateness.

That sounds very much like some old hippy talking – preaching love and gentleness. But don't you still uphold honour and surely that itself might sometimes require the use of force, of violence? Surely there is a contradiction, here – between such tenderness, such love, and such force?

Personally, I think there is no contradiction, only a natural human balance. One prefers love, gentleness, empathy, but one is prepared, if necessary, to defend one's self and one's loved ones from those who might act in a selfish, dishonourable, harmful, violent, way toward us in some personal situation.

This nature balance – an innate nobility – is possessed by many human beings, and has been, for millennia; which is why some people just naturally have a sense of fair-play and would instinctively "do the right thing" in some situations, for example if they saw two men (or even one man) battering a woman in a public place or if they came across a group of youths taunting an elderly disabled man. And it is this natural balance, this notion of fairness, which is another of the numinous foundations of human culture.

Thus, it is that, according to my understanding, it is personal love – with all its tenderness – combined with fairness, a sense of personal honour, and with the ability to empathize with other human beings, that are not only numinous, but which also express our culture, our social nature, and are the things we should value, treasure, and seek to develop within ourselves.

It is unfortunate, therefore, that our predilection for manufacturing and believing in abstractions has, over millennia, and especially in the past hundred or more years, detracted from these three noble virtues of personal love, personal honour, and empathy, and instead led to the manufacture of new types of living where some abstraction or other is the goal, rather than such virtues.

My own life – until quite recently – is an example of how a person can foolishly and unethically place abstractions before such virtues and thus cause suffering in others, and for themselves.

One reviewer of your autobiography wrote of it as a modern allegory; a story of personal redemption, but without God. Would you agree?

With my four-decade long love of abstractions I certainly seem to have been a good example of human stupidity and arrogance; of someone obsessed with ideas, and ideals, for whom love and personal happiness came second, at best. Someone who arrogantly, sometimes even fanatically, believed they were "doing the right thing" and who found or who made excuses for the suffering, both personal and impersonal, that he caused.

Even worse, perhaps, was that there were many times in my life when I understood this, instinctively, emotionally, and consciously, but I always ended up ignoring such understanding – at least until recently. So, in effect, that makes me a worse offender than many others.

So, yes – perhaps my life is one such allegory; one story of how a human being can return to the foundations of human culture, and thus embrace the numinous virtue of compassion, of ceasing to intentionally cause suffering, of considering that a shared and loyal love between two human beings is the most beautiful, the most precious, the most numinous, thing of all.

But without a religious dimension? That, surely, is the key here, and what makes your story so very interesting?

Certainly, a kind of redemption without a belief in conventional religion. But that is only my own personal conclusion, my own personal Way, which therefore does not necessarily mean it is correct. It is only my own Numinous Way, deriving from my own pathéi-mathos, founded on empathy, compassion, honour, and where there is no need for some supreme deity, or some theology, or even for some belief in something supra-personal. Instead, I feel there is a human dimension here – a natural return to valuing human beings, born of empathy. That is, that what is important is a close,

a personal and empathic, interaction between human beings, and a living in a compassionate and honourable way – rather than a religious approach, with prayer, with rituals, with notions of sin, of redemption by some supra-personal deity, or some belief in some after-life and which after-life is ours if we behave in the particular ways that some religion or some Sage or teacher or prophet prescribes or describes.

Without, in particular, any texts or impersonal guidance or revelation – since we have all the guidance we need, or can have all the guidance we need, because of and with and through empathy; by means of developing empathy, and so feeling as others feel. Thus, we lose that egocentric – that selfish, self-contained – view of ourselves, and instead view, and importantly feel, ourselves as connected to, part of, other human life, other beings; we know, we feel, we understand, that they are us and that we are them, and that it is only the illusion of the self, the abstraction of the self, that keeps us from this knowing, this feeling, this understanding of ourselves as a nexion to all other Life.

Thus, there is – or seems to me to be – a natural simplicity here in this Way of Empathy, Compassion, and Honour: a child learning and maturing, to perchance develop into another type of human being who might perchance with others develop new, more loving, more empathic, more balanced, ways of social living, and thus a new type or species of human culture where abstractions no longer hold people in thrall.

Is this – in enabling this new culture – where you think artists have an important rôle to play?

Yes, artists and artisans as pioneers of a new type of human culture – artists and artisans of the Numinous who can presence, and thus express, in their works those things which can inspire us to be human, to be more human, and to value the numinous virtues of empathy, compassion, personal love, and personal honour.

David Myatt
2010 CE

Source:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20111009182523/http://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2011/01/16/numinous-foundations-of-human-culture/>

In Pursuit of Wisdom

For thousands of years, we human beings have been aware – or could discover, for ourselves – a certain wisdom, a particular conscious knowledge concerning our own nature.

From Aeschylus to Sophocles to Siddhārtha Gautama, from the mythos of the *Μοῖραι* [1] to the postulate of samsara, from the notion of Fate to the Sermon on the Mount, and beyond, we have had available to us an understanding of *Δίκη* [2]: of how we human beings are often balanced between honour and dishonour; balanced between *ὑβρις* and *ἀρετή*; between our animalistic desires, our passions, and our human ability to be noble, to achieve excellence; a balance manifest in our known ability to be able to control, to restrain, ourselves, and thus find and follow a middle way, of *ἁρμονίη*.

For several Aeons, this understanding, this middle way, was of two essential things. First, of how such a middle way enabled us to avoid causing or contributing to that suffering which our own *πάθει μάθος* – our learning from the sorrows of personal experience – informed us was unwise because contrary to the natural balance (the numinosity) that such *πάθει μάθος* intimately revealed to us. Second, of how this balance – this self control – was preferable for us, as individuals, since to upset this balance – for example to go beyond the limits established by our ancestral customs – was: (i) to invite a personal retribution (or misfortune) from the gods; or (ii) to invite punishment from a supreme deity; or (3) condemn us to be reborn again and thus have to toil yet again to obtain reward (karma) enough to progress in accord with the *bhavacakra*.

As Sophocles wrote, over two thousand years ago – *ὑβρις φυτεύει τύραννον* [3]. That is, *ὑβρις* (hubris) plants the *τύραννον*, although the sense of *τύραννος* here is not exactly what our fairly modern term *tyrant* is commonly regarded as imputing. Rather, it refers to the intemperate person of excess who is so subsumed with some passion or aim or a lust for power that they go far beyond the due, the accepted, bounds of behaviour and thus exceed the limits of or misuse whatever authority they have been entrusted with. Thus do they, by their excess, by their disrespect for the customs of their ancestors, by their lack of reasoned, well-balanced, judgement [*σωφρονεῖν*] offend the gods, and thus, to restore the balance, do the *Ἐρινύες* take revenge. For it is in the nature of the *τύραννος* that they forget, or they scorn, the truth, the ancient wisdom, that their lives are subject to, guided by, *Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ' Ἐρινύες*.



Λυκοῦργος and the Ἑρινύες

Thus the knowledge that our pride, our arrogance, our uncontrolled desires, our lack of *σωφρονεῖν*, are the genesis of the disruption of the natural balance – both within ourselves, and exterior to ourselves.

Or, as Dante Alighieri expressed it in the terms of one particular mythos:

The infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile,
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
The mother of mankind.

The received wisdom was personal avoidance of the error of *ὑβρις* because we, we individuals and possibly our immediate family, would suffer: either in this life (by for example receiving bad luck, inviting misfortune, or having some tyrant foisted upon our community) or in some afterlife we believed in. Hence what we would now describe as ethical behaviour, for individuals – our control of our instincts, our desires – essentially derived from something supra-personal, such as ancestral customs, some belief in some gods, some faith in some supreme deity, or acceptance of some postulate such as karma or nirvana. In the terms of Christian theology, the belief being that we need to replace the guidance, the temptations, the guile, of The Infernal Serpent with the guidance, the love, of Christus Redemptor.

More recently, we human beings have committed a new kind of *ὑβρις*. Or more correctly perhaps, our *ὑβρις* has acquired a new form, new manifestations. That is, we have manufactured causal abstractions – ideals, ideas, *-isms* and *-ologies* – which we have identified with and/or striven to attain, both for ourselves, and for others; so that it has become apposite to write that causal abstractions are the genesis of suffering, for both ourselves, and for others. because such abstractions disrupt the natural balance of Life [*ψυχή*]: the life within us, within other sentient beings, and the Life that is presented to us as Nature, leading thus to a loss of *ἁρμονίη*. This kind of *ὑβρις* also plants the *τύραννος*, but the impersonal kind of *τύραννος* that lives in the practical implementation of such abstractions, internally and externally – so that, for instance, we allow ourselves to become subjects of some *-ism* or some *-ology* (whether described as or deemed to be political, social, or religious) or we become actual subjects of some impersonal entity such as a State, controlled, constrained, by laws, taxation, and the ever-present threat of the use of force by the 'officially appointed' minions of such an entity, so that such an impersonal entity has, in all but name, usurped our older gods, our *Μοῖραι*, our God, our karma.

Thus, the reality now is often of either (i) obedience to the *dictat* of some entity such as The State, our government, or the mandates of some supra-national body such as the United Nations, because to dissent would render us liable to punishment; or (ii) a belief in – an acceptance of – such entities as the provider of 'good fortune', of 'justice' [4], and of prosperity, for us and our family.

Here, the threat of exterior, practical, punishment – the always present threat of imprisonment, the use of force against us by such entities as the Police, and ultimately the armed forces – has largely replaced the interior threat we hitherto might have imposed upon ourselves by our acceptance of such things as retribution from the gods, or punishment from some supreme deity. That is, ethical behaviour, for individuals still essentially derives from something supra-personal involving an *us* and *them*, the others.

The Pursuit of Wisdom

Despite these approaches, ancient and modern – that is, despite the ethical behaviour these two approaches encouraged and even demand, or tried to encourage – human beings, *en masse*, do not seem to have significantly changed. Thus, the world is still replete with individuals who cannot control their desires and who thus commit dishonourable deeds, the error of *ὑβρις*. For every minute of every day, year following year, human beings are murdered, brutalized, bullied, raped, injured, tortured, humiliated, abused – just as deception, theft, robbery, fraud, and malfeasance, occur with monotonous regularity.

The world is still rife with bloody murderous conflict, except that new causes of conflict have been added to the ancient ones of personal greed, personal dishonour, and the desires of some *τύραννος* or other. For the new entities that we have manufactured – such as nation-States – have themselves caused suffering, of a magnitude arguably greater than caused by some *τύραννος* and far greater than could be caused by individuals unable to control their dishonourable urges, their greed. For example, conflicts between the modern nation-States of the West, and internal conflict within such States, have resulted in the deaths of an estimated one hundred million human beings in just over a century [4].

Thus, it seems as if the ancient wisdom of *Δίκη* has remained the preserve of a minority, and thus that the accumulated *πάθει μάθος* of millennia – manifest in such things as literature, Art, music, ancestral culture, and spiritual

Ways of Life – has little or no relevance for or been a significant influence upon the majority, even in those modern States which have had, for nigh on a century, compulsory education for children. [5]

Since murderous conflict, the error of *ὑβρις*, and a lack of reasoned judgement, and thus suffering, remain – despite a variety of middle ways over millennia to divert us from such things, and despite numerous individuals over millennia, in their own ways, understanding *Amr bil Maroof wa Nahi anil Munkar* [6] – it is perhaps pertinent to consider if there is, or might be, a better expression of that wisdom, that particular conscious knowledge, concerning our own nature and how we might find and express that balance which enables us to restrain ourselves and avoid the error of *ὑβρις*.

That is, is there a Way which does not mean or imply a belief in some ancient mythos, or demand of us some faith in some supreme deity and some afterlife, or involve us in obedience to some supra-personal entity whose authority ultimately derives from the threat or the use of force or acceptance of some suffering-causing *-ism* or *-ology* whose nature is enshrined in the cliché that the abstraction of happiness, the abstraction of the welfare, the abstraction of the security, the abstraction of the prosperity, of the majority is more important than the fate of some individuals, and that thus for such abstractions to be obtained, in some (mythical) future the suffering of some or even of many individuals is an 'acceptable price' to pay?

In brief, a Way which does not of necessity involve us in considering matters as we have hitherto almost invariably done: by whether or not we, as individuals, are rewarded or punished (in this life, or in some believed in afterlife). That is, which does not of necessity posit some personal abstraction for us to accept or believe in – be such an abstraction some personal prosperity or some peace (in this or some next life such as Heaven or Jannah), or some supreme deity, or some notion such as nirvana or even some mythos such as *Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ' Ἐρινύες*.

For such things – and the middle ways derived from them in the past – are, correctly appreciated and thence understood, only pointers toward a deeper truth, which is that of the error of the self, and an error revealed by the nature of the causality implicit in this individual desire to seek some reward and avoid punishment, or, in Buddhism, avoid the periodicity of samsara.

Even in Buddhism, where this truth concerning the self has been dis-covered, revealed, in a rather rational manner, the practical reality for the majority is of *individual* striving, and the assumption of a goal for individuals. Hence the reason of the individual doing what they do – meditation, giving alms, striving to avoid causing suffering, for example – because they themselves seek liberation, nirvana; because they are concerned about *their* karma. Thus there is still a judgement based on the concept of individual reward. Hence, also, the striving for a posited goal, a striving exemplified by the *bhavacakra*.

The Error of The Self and The Natural Balance of Empathy

The error of the self is the error of a simple cause-and-effect predicated on the separation of living beings and upon a separate goal which the separated individual could attain by a given causal process.

Thus, and for example in Buddhism, the goal is nirvana and the process the Eight-Fold Path; in Christianity the goal is Heaven and the process is acceptance of Christus Redemptor; in Islam the goal is Jannah and the process is complete submission to Allah (and acceptance of Quran, Sunnah, and Shariah); in Hellenic culture the goal was *ἀρετή* (and thence a good place in Hades) by means such as avoidance of *ὑβρις*. In modern times, for the plethora of agnostics and atheists, the goal is happiness/prosperity by means such as The State, whether actively or passively accepted [7].

This assumption of self – of the separation of living beings, and such a causal process – is inherent in most if not all hitherto spiritual Ways which posit and require a praxis, and in the modern abstraction of The State, and also forms the basis of the ethics deriving from such Ways as well as the ethics of that modern abstraction. That is, either (i) The State defines what is moral, by means such as enforceable laws, or (ii) such spiritual Ways posit what is moral based on their particular given goal and their given causal process and praxis of achieving that goal.

Why is this assumption of self an error? Because of empathy, which uncovers the nature of Being and beings that has hitherto been obscured by such spiritual Ways and by abstractions such as The State. For empathy – the innate (if still little used and underdeveloped) human faculty of *συμπάθεια* [*συν-πάθος*] – reveals the separation of living beings for the assumption, the limitation, it is.

For empathy reveals the *a-causal* nature (the numinous nature) of living beings – and the nexions that they are to Being, thus establishing a human ethics independent of the hitherto assumed cause-and-effect of separate human beings striving for some assumed goal by means of some given causal process.

Empathy thus establishes a new (or possibly a re-expressed older) understanding of our human nature – both existing and potential – and a new (or possibly a re-expressed older) knowing of how we might avoid *ὑβρις* and thus the suffering that *ὑβρις* brings. This understanding and knowing is of the numinous manifest in the indivisibility of living beings: of how the joy, the pain, the sorrow, the suffering, the very life, of what has hitherto been causally perceived as *the-separate-others* is in essence our joy, pain, sorrow, suffering, and life. For this, this natural balance, this *ἀρμονίη*, is what empathy, in the living moment, reveals – or rather what empathy by its very nature naturally and wordlessly and effortlessly moves us toward: what empathy brings-into-being.

Hence the empathic human being avoids Al-Munkar (and thus avoids causing suffering), and inclines toward Al-Maruf, just by being human – by using the faculty of empathy in the same way the faculties of sight, smell, taste, touch are used. That is, naturally as wordless perceptions of what-is, and not of what is assumed or believed. There is thus no naming and no ideation necessary or involved in this use of empathy; only a living in the transient moment. For it is

not correct to give names to – to denote by names and terms – some-things, some existents; since such naming, such denoting, implies the causality of separation between subject and object, and it is this causality that empathy transcends.

There are therefore no given or assumed causal means – no techniques, methods, or teachings, no praxis, no texts, no faith in some-thing or some-one – as there is no goal, assumed and/or to be striven for. There is only empathy, and its development and use: only the empathy of the living changeable transient moment, and *us-as-Being* (The Numen, the acausal Unity, The Cosmos) presented, temporarily, as one living nexion (*one being*) on one planet orbiting one star in one Galaxy.

How then to develop, to cultivate, empathy? By letting-go of all abstractions (all *-isms* and all *-ologies*). By ceasing to denote living beings by causal terms but instead perceiving them wordlessly in the moment of our perception. By ceasing to prejudge other human beings, either by some outer perceived form/appearance or by some assumption or assumptions manufactured or made by others – and instead relating to them as hitherto newly-known beings in the natural immediacy of the moment of our meeting with them. By placing ourselves in The Cosmic Perspective – that is, by an acceptance of ourselves as but one fragile fallible microcosmic nexion only temporarily presented on one planet orbiting one star in one Galaxy in a Cosmos of billions of Galaxies. This is the essence of *wu-wei* – a knowing, a feeling, of Being; a knowing, a feeling, of The Numen, the acausal Unity, the Cosmos itself; and a knowing, a feeling, once described in that ancient wisdom termed Tao, and yet which even then, as now, could not and cannot be described by or contained within that one, or any, particular term.

David Myatt
2011 CE

Notes

[1]

τίς οὖν ἀνάγκης ἐστὶν οἰακοστροφός.
Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ' Ἐρινύες

Who then compels to steer us?
Trimorphed Moirai with their ever-heedful Furies!

Aeschylus (attributed), *Prometheus Bound*, 515-6

[2] In respect of *Δίκη*, see for example my *Principle of Δίκη*, and also my essay *Quid Est Veritas?*

[3] *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 872

[4] The modern notion of an impersonal abstract 'justice' – said to be obtainable by the making and enforcement of laws – has replaced the older, wiser, personal notion of the natural balance which was manifest in *Δίκη* and in the *Ἐρινύες*.

[4] For example, sixty million people in the Second World War, sixteen million in the First World War, and over twenty million in the Soviet Union mostly as a result of Stalin. Estimates of the number of people killed by the Mongol tyrant Genghis Khan range from a possible fifteen to twenty million, to a speculative eighty million.

[5] For an overview of the failure of the modern State, refer to my polemical essay, *The Failure and Immoral Nature of The State*.

[6]

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

(Quran, 3:104) "Let there rise among you a group Calling others to Al-Maruf [the honourable] and forbidding Al-Munkar [what is dishonourable], for these are the ones who will achieve success [Jannah]." Interpretation of Meaning

[7] Such happiness/prosperity of the majority – together with what is termed their 'security' – may be said to be the stated or the assumed *raison d'etre* of The State. Given that in modern times most human beings live in areas where States have assumed or obtained 'authority' over them, by whatever means, it might well be argued that The State with its aims and goals (based on some and various *-isms* and *-ologies*, including that of *δημοκρατία*) has, for those uncommitted to spiritual Ways, become an idealized weltanschauung supplanting more spiritual Ways, and a weltanschauung when not actively affirmed is at least passively accepted by a majority of such uncommitted, non-religious, ones – and even by many religious ones in agreement with that modern abstract division between State and Religion which many supporters and/or theorists of The State assume exists or believe should exist.

Source:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20111009182329/http://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2011/03/24/in-pursuit-of-wisdom/>

War and Violence in the Philosophy of The Numinous Way

Editorial Note, 2023: For Myatt's later writing on the subject see his essay *Persecution and War* included here as an Appendix. However, this older essay is more detailed, examining as it does *Leges Regiae*, *Jus Papirianum*, and (in a footnote) Augustine's *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, his *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum ad Bonifacium Papam*, and *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos*.

ooo

The Morality of The Numinous Way

In order to understand the concepts of war and violence in terms of the philosophy of The Numinous Way, it is necessary to begin by outlining the morality of The Numinous Way, since war and violence are inseparably bound up with how one understands morality.

Morality is, for The Numinous Way, a consequence of individuals using the faculty of empathy [1] – that is, a consequence of the insight and the understanding (the acausal knowing) that empathy provides for individuals in the immediacy-of-the-moment. This insight and knowledge is of how we are not isolated human beings, but rather only one fragile microcosmic nexion and thus connected to all Life, sentient and otherwise, human and otherwise, of this planet and otherwise. Consequently, there is a cosmic perspective – a cosmic ethic – and compassion: that is, the human virtue of having *συμπάθεια* with other living beings, and the feeling, the knowledge, that we should treat other human beings as we ourselves would wish to be treated: with fairness, dignity, and respect.

The morality of The Numinous Way is therefore defined by a personal honour, a personal compassion, and the personal virtue of justice. For justice is not some abstract concept, but rather a personal virtue, as *εὐταξία* [2] is a personal virtue. For justice is the personal virtue of fairness; the quality of balance, and is linked to other personal virtues as mentioned, for example, by Cicero:

"Aliis ego te virtutibus, continentiae, gravitatis, iustitiae, fidei, ceteris omnibus." [3]

This morality is therefore a personal one so that it is the living individual of honour – someone who possesses certain virtues – who represents, who is, the cosmic ethics of The Numinous Way. For,

"the Cosmic Ethic [...] cannot live in some law, in some Institution, in some Court, in some dogma or in some abstract theory. To be numinous, to presence the numinous, what is ethical requires a living honourable person, not some abstract theory of ethics." *The Natural Balance of Honour* (2011)

Thus the source of, the authority for – and the reason for choosing – such a morality is and can only be the judgement of the individual, deriving as this judgement does from their empathy and their unique *πάθει μάθος*.

The Source of Authority

For The Numinous Way, there is no authority other than that of personal empathy, personal honour and *πάθει μάθος*. That is, the source of authority is personal, and the bounds of this authority are defined by honour, with The Numinous Way thus being:

"the Way of the numinous and individual authority of *πάθει μάθος* where one's own empathy and one's own learning from practical experience take precedence and are considered a means for us to become *a friend of σοφόν* and thus acquire the virtue and the skill that has been termed wisdom." Preface, *Selected Writings Concerning The Numinous Way* (2011).

In practical terms, this means that the individual following or being guided by this Way relies on and is guided by their own judgement, their own experience, and a Code of Honour, and does not relinquish these in favour of some chain-of-command or in favour of accepting the authority of some supra-personal institution, of some law, or of some association, political party or whatever. In place of accepting and submitting to such external authority there is only the giving of personal loyalty according to a Code of Honour, with such giving by its honourable and personal nature never involving the individual in relinquishing their own judgement or acting contrary to that Code of Honour.

Violence, War, The State, and Leges Regiae

Used in its correct, original, non-pejorative way, violence is using physical force against another person sufficient to cause some physical injury. However, a fairly recent synonym for violence is *force* – a term often used by politicians and castellans and theorists of The State, among others, when they attempt to try and justify the use of violence by those persons (such as the police) such politicians and castellans (and others) believe have some 'lawful authority' to inflict injury on people.

The distinction that such politicians and castellans and others thus attempt to make between violence and force reveals their reliance, stated or unstated, known or unknown, on the principles of *Leges Regiae*. That is, on the principles used historically by kings and emperors and their courts where someone or some group assumes authority over others, and thus exercises command over them, makes decisions for or on behalf of them, and, ultimately, by the use of violence and the threat of punishment are able to force or persuade others to obey them and their commands.

Principles, for example, manifest in the ancient *Jus Papirianum* attributed to Sextus Papirius:

"After Romulus had distinguished the persons of higher rank from those of inferior condition, then he passed laws and apportioned the duties for each to do...

For the king, he chose the following prerogatives ... to maintain the guardianship of the laws and the national customs, ... to judge in person the greatest of crimes ... to have absolute command in war. " [4]

Notice how Romulus – the legendary King of ancient Rome – assumed the authority to divide individuals into categories – high and low – and how he manufactured laws, and told individuals what their duties would be, and assumed absolute command in war.

Modern nation-States have, via people such as Augustine of Hippo [5], simply replaced kings and emperors with Prime Ministers, Presidents, or representatives (or whatever) and covered or attempted to cover their use of violence (by their police forces and armies) and the threat of punishment (such as prison) by rhetoric about 'law and order' and by social and political theories (such as that of democracy). But the demand that individuals accept some supra-personal authority remains the same, as does the threat or the use of violence against individuals by officials appointed and approved by such personal authorities, as does the demand that individuals forsake their own judgement and rely instead on the judgement of ministers, governments officials, and on the Courts of Law of The State. In addition – as it was for the Roman kings and Caesars – the individual is expected to obey the laws they manufacture, with such laws being regarded as 'just' and moral.

Thus justice – far from being a personal virtue, defined by honour – becomes what some king, some Caesar, some *τύραννος*, or some government decrees it is according to the laws they manufacture and which their officials and their Courts uphold and enforce, by violence (or the threat thereof) and by imprisonment (or the threat thereof). Hence all the rhetoric by castellans and officials of The State that individuals "should not take the law into their own hands", whereas true – natural, numinous, living – justice only exists in living honourable individuals and their actions.

This usurpation of personal judgement and natural justice is overtly manifest in war. War – the *bellum* of Latin writers such as Cicero and Livy – is armed conflict involving large opposing groups where there is acceptance, by those fighting, of some recognized chain-of-command and of some supra-personal commanding authority who or which is or are personally unknown to most if not all of those accepting such authority, and where the conflict is mostly if not entirely non-personal for all or most of those involved. That is, war mostly or entirely results from the pursuit of some abstraction, or from the desire, the beliefs, of some leader or commander, or from the political or social or religious agenda or policies of some supra-personal authority such as some government.

In The Numinous Way, a distinction is made between war and *combat* in that combat refers to *gewin* – similar to the old Germanic *werra*, as distinct from the modern *krieg*. That is, combat refers to a more personal armed quarrel between much smaller factions (and often between just two adversaries – as in single combat, and trial by combat) when there is, among those fighting, some personal matter at stake or some personal interest involved, with most if not all of those fighting doing so under the leadership of someone they personally know and respect and with the quarrel usually occurring in the locality or localities where the combatants live.

Thus, war is contrary to The Numinous Way – to the Cosmic Ethic – not only because of the impersonal suffering it causes, but also because it is inseparably bound up with individuals having to relinquish their own judgement, with them pursuing some lifeless un-numinous abstraction by violent means, and with the development of supra-personal abstract and thus un-numinous notions of 'justice' and law.

Hence, there is, for The Numinous Way, no such thing as a 'just war' – for war is inherently unjust and un-numinous. What is just and lawful are honourable individuals and their actions, and such combat as such individuals may honourably and personally undertake, and such violence as they may honourably and of necessity employ in pursuit of being fair and ensuring fairness.

David Myatt
October 2011 CE

Notes

[1] For a basic explanation of empathy, see my essay *Introduction to The Philosophy of The Numen*

[2] εὐταξία is what I would describe as the quality, the personal virtue, of self-restraint; of personal orderly (balanced, honourable, well-mannered) conduct especially under adversity or duress.

Regarding εὐταξία, Cicero wrote:

"Deinceps de ordine rerum et de opportunitate temporum dicendum est. Haec autem scientia continentur ea, quam Graeci εὐταξίαν nominant, non hanc, quam interpretamur modestiam, quo in verbo modus inest, sed illa est εὐταξία, in qua intellegitur ordinis conservatio. Itaque, ut eandem nos modestiam appellemus..."
De Officiis, 1, 40, 142

[3] M. Tullius Cicero, *For Lucius Murena*, 10, 23. My translation is: 'For your other virtues of self-restraint, of dignity, of justice, of good faith, and all other good qualities...'

[4] The quotation is from the reconstruction of the texts given in: Allan Chester Johnson, Paul Robinson Coleman-Norton, and Frank Bourne. *Ancient Roman Statutes: A Translation with Introduction, Commentary, Glossary, and Index*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961

[5] The assumed need for individuals to accept supra-personal authority is much in evidence in Augustine, especially in his *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos* in which he champions a order, a hierarchy, with God its pinnacle and ordinary individuals at the bottom. In between are those appointed to oversee individuals and ensure 'order' with everyone in their rightful place: "Ordo est parium dispariumque rerum sua cuique loca tribuens dispositio." (XIX, xiii)

As Augustine writes in *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* (XXII, 75): "The natural order, which would have peace amongst men, necessitates that the judgement about and the authority to declare war should reside in those who have authority over others [a monarch/prince]."

In addition, his rhetoric regarding the necessity of waging war is remarkably similar to that of modern politicians:

"War is undertaken to bring about peace. Therefore, even during war, remember the value of peace so that when those you have fought are conquered you can show them the advantages of peace..." (*Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum ad Bonifacium Papam*, CLXXXIX)

He also, it seems, in writing about a 'just war', provided them with rhetorical justification for castigating their enemies as 'evil', as 'wicked' and they themselves, even though they may cause suffering and death, as doing what is 'right', what God decrees, as, for example, Bush and Blair did during the invasion and occupation of Iraq, and as with the desire of some nation-States to humiliate and vanquish those deemed as enemies. As Augustus wrote in *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos*:

"Nam et cum iustum geritur bellum, pro peccato e contrario dimicatur; et omnis uictoria, cum etiam malis prouenit, diuino iudicio uictos humiliat uel emendans peccata uel puniens." [For even when we wage a just war, our enemies must be sinners, for every victory then, even though gained by evil men, results from divine decree, with the vanquished humiliated and their sins either punished or wiped away.] XIX, 15

Source:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120329200114/http://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2011/10/25/war-and-violence-in-the-philosophy-of-the-numinous-way/>

A Note Concerning Myngath

Myngath is, as the subtitle of the work indicates, some recollections of my life; although it is perhaps more memoir of an experiential life than conventional autobiography. More of a recollection of some of the deeds, the experiences, the feelings, that over a period of some forty years led me to develop my philosophy of The Numinous Way, and thus changed me from a violence-loving neo-nazi activist and criminal – via involvement with Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, and a period as a Christian monk – to someone who values and appreciates empathy and compassion, and for whom a personal love, loyally shared, is the most numinous expression of our humanity.

A strange ending, perhaps, for someone once variously described in the following terms:

" A neo-nazi whose ideas were said to be the inspiration for the man who let off a nail bomb in Central London in 1999 has converted to an extremist form of Islam... Myatt is reportedly the author of a fascist terrorist handbook and a former leader of the violent far-right group Combat 18..." [1]

" This is the man who shaped mind of a bomber; Cycling the lanes around Malvern, the mentor who drove David Copeland to kill [...] Riding a bicycle around his Worcestershire home town sporting a wizard-like beard and quirky dress-sense, the former monk could easily pass as a country eccentric or off-beat intellectual. But behind David Myatt's studious exterior lies a more sinister character that has been at the forefront of extreme right-wing ideology in Britain since the mid-1960s." [2]

" A staunch advocate of Jihad, suicide missions and killing Jews [...] and an ardent defender of bin Laden." [3]

" Beneath [his] seemingly innocuous exterior is a man of extreme and calculated hatred..." [4]

" An example of the axis between right-wing extremists and Islamists..." [5]

" A ferocious Jihadi..." [6]

Perhaps the weirdest part of my story, as recounted in *Myngath*, is (at least to me) that I did not, and have not – and despite acknowledging my many errors and mistakes and admitting to the suffering I have caused – ended what Professor Kaplan called [7] my *Siddhartha-like quest for truth* by embracing or returning to the answers of some conventional religion and thus becoming some sort of penitent trusting in God or Allah. As mentioned in *Myngath*:

" To live with such self-knowledge would surely be – and should be – hard [...] I felt it would have been just too easy for me to depend upon, to turn to, to rely on, Allah, on God – to have one's remorse removed by some belief in some possible redemption, to have one's mistakes, errors – "sins" – voided by some supra-personal means. To escape into prayer, Namaz. Can there be, I began to wonder, hope, redemption – some meaning in personal tragedy – without a Saviour's grace? Without God, Allah, prayer, Namaz, submission, sin, and faith? "

For several years I struggled, painfully slowly and perhaps still somewhat pridefully, to find some personal answers, *sans* a supreme deity, *sans* any deity, and *sans* the ideation of mechanisms such as karma and the bhavacakra.

As I wrote last year (2010) in the essay *A Change of Perspective*,

"The Numinous Way – as now developed, and as explicated by me in the past two years or so – represents [the] result[s] of my diverse experiences, my learning from my mistakes, and my empathic awareness of the suffering I have caused to others.

Hence, I have been, for many decades, wrong; misguided. Or, rather, I misguided myself, allowing idealism and a perceived duty to triumph over, to veil, my humanity. My good intentions were no excuse, even though, for nearly four decades, I made them an excuse, as idealists always do. For, during all the decades of my various involvements – of my arrogant interference based on some abstraction – I sincerely believed I was doing what was 'right', or 'honourable', and that such suffering as I caused, or aided, or incited, was 'necessary' for some ideal to be born in some "future".

But now my inescapable reality is that of a personal empathy, a personal compassion, a simple, quiet, letting-be; a knowing that such answers as I have, now, are just my answers, and that I have no duty other than to be human, to gently strive to be a better human being through reforming myself by quietly cultivating empathy and compassion. Of course, I do not expect to be understood, and probably will continue to be judged, by others, according to some, or all, of my former beliefs, involvements. "

For those few who might be interested in this wyrdful journey, this Siddhartha-like quest, the link below [8] is to my apologia, *Myngath*.

David Myatt
October 2011 CE

Notes

[1] *The Times* (London), April 24, 2006

[2] *Sunday Mercury*, July 9, 2000

[3] Wistrich, Robert S. *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad*, Random House, 2010

[4] Gerry Gable, *Searchlight*, July 2000

[5] Mark Weitzman: *Antisemitismus und Holocaust-Leugnung: Permanente Elemente des globalen Rechtsextremismus*, in Thomas Greven: *Globalisierter Rechtsextremismus? Die extremistische Rechte in der Ära der Globalisierung*. 1 Auflage. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften/GWV Fachverlage GmbH, Wiesbaden 2006, pp.61-64

[6] Martin Amis. *The Second Plane*. Jonathan Cape, 2008, p.157

[7] Jeffrey Kaplan (ed.). *David Wulstan Myatt*. In: *Encyclopedia of White Power. A Sourcebook on the Radical Racist Right*. AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, CA 2000, p. 216ff

[8] <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/david-myatt-myngath.pdf>

Source:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120329195735/http://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2011/10/11/a-note-concerning-myngath/>

Appendix

Persecution And War

A Remembering

Reared as a Roman Catholic, educated for a while at a Catholic preparatory school and then – again for a while – at a Catholic boarding school, I remember the history taught by our teachers and Priests of the centuries-long persecution of English and Irish Catholics that began in the 16th century. There were stories of martyrs; of recusants; of secret Masses; of anti-Catholic polemics and propaganda; and of the monks who – after the suppression of the monasteries, the theft of monastic lands and wealth, begun by a tyrannos named Henry – escaped to France and founded monasteries such as the one at Dieulouard in Lorraine.

There thus was engendered in we Catholic children a feeling of difference, aided by the fact that our Mass was in Latin,

by our sacrament of confession, by the practice of Gregorian chant, and by the singing of hymns such as Faith Of Our Fathers with its memorable verses

Faith of our Fathers living still
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword [...]
We will be true to thee till death [...]

Our Fathers, chained in prisons dark,
Were still in heart and conscience free [...]
Faith of our Fathers, Mary's prayers
Shall win our country back to thee

This feeling of difference was forcefully remembered when I in the early 1970's – during The Troubles – ventured to visit Northern Ireland; when I in the mid-1970's and as a Catholic monk spent several weeks staying at a Presbytery in Dublin; and when I in the mid-1990's – before the Good Friday Agreement – visited Derry.

Forcefully remembered because I listened to accounts of the burning of Catholic homes by Protestant mobs in 1969 and the subsequent flight of hundreds of Catholic families to the Irish Republic where they were housed in refugee camps; listened to witness accounts of the killing of eleven Catholics, including a Priest, by the British Army in Ballymurphy in 1971; listened to witness accounts of the killing of fourteen Catholics, again by the British Army, in Derry in 1972; and listened to stories of the persecution of Irish Catholics under British rule.

Such a remembering, such a childhood feeling of difference, formed part of the years-long personal and philosophical reflexion that occupied me for several years as I, between 2006 and 2009, developed my 'numinous way' and then between 2011 and 2012 gradually refined it into the 'way of pathei-mathos', with the core of that reflexion concerning matters such as extremism, my own extremist past, war, prejudice, intolerance, and persecution.

War And Combat

Familiar as I was with ancient works by Thucydides, Herodotus, Livy, and others; with many works concerning more recent European history by modern historians, as well as with personal accounts of those who had fought for both the Allies and the Axis during World War Two, I recalled some words of Cicero:

"Aliis ego te virtutibus, continentiae, gravitatis, iustitiae, fidei, ceteris omnibus."

"because of your other virtues of self-restraint, of dignity, of fairness, of honesty, and all other such qualities..." [1]

Which led me to consider making a distinction between war and a more personal combat, between a modern *krieg* and the Old Germanic *werra*, given that war, from my reading of and admittedly fallible understanding of history, seemed to me to involve – by its very nature of necessitating killing and causing injury – intolerance, hatred, a divisive sense of difference often involving "us" believing we were "better" (or more civilized) than them, our enemies, thus leading to a dehumanization of "the enemy". A divisive sense of difference and a dehumanization often aided (particularly in modern times) by polemics, rumour, and propaganda; and a divisive sense of difference, a dehumanization, together with polemics, rumour, and propaganda, which I knew from my own decades of political and religious activism formed a core part of all types of extremism.

The distinction I considered was that personal combat unlike war did not involve large armies fighting against each other because of some diktat or personal agenda by some tyrannos or because of some ideology or religion or policy of some State or government. Instead, combat involved small groups – such as clans or tribes or neighbours – fighting because of some personal quarrel or some wrong or some perceived grievance.

But the more I considered this supposed distinction between combat and war the more I realized that in practice there was no such distinction since both involved principles similar to those of the Ancient Roman *Leges Regiae* – qv. the *Jus Papirianum* attributed to Sextus Papirius – where someone or some many possess or have acquired (through for example force of arms) or have assumed authority over others, and who by the use of violence and/or by the threat of punishment and/or by oratory or propaganda, are able to force or persuade others to accept such authority and obey the commands of such authority.

This acceptance by individuals of a supra-personal authority – or, more often, the demand by some supra-personal authority that individuals accept such a supra-personal authority – was manifest in the Christian writings of Augustine (b.354 CE, d.430 CE), such as his *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos* where in Book XIX, chapter xiii, he wrote of the necessity of a hierarchy in which God is the supreme authority, with peace between human beings and God requiring obedience to that authority; with peace between human beings, and civil peace, also of necessity requiring obedience to an order in which each person has their allotted place, "Ordo est parium dispariumque rerum sua cuique loca tribuens dispositio."

Which hierarchy and acceptance of authority led Augustine to describe – in book XXII of *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* – the concept that war requires the authority of a person (such as a monarch) who has such "necessary" authority over others. This concept regarding war has remained a guiding principle of modern Western nations where the authority to inaugurate and prosecute a war against perceived enemies resides in the State, and thus in modern potentates who have seized power or in elected governments and their representatives such as Presidents and Prime Ministers.

Authority And Society

In the nations of the West, such a hierarchy of authority applies not only to war and its prosecution but also to changes, to reform, in society [2] for there is, as I mentioned in *The Numinous Way Of Pathei-Mathos*,

"a hierarchy of judgement involved, whatever political 'flavour' the government is assigned to, is assumed to represent, or claims it represents; with this hierarchy of necessity requiring the individual in society to either (i) relinquish their own judgement, being accepting of or acquiescing in (from whatever reason or motive such as desire to avoid punishment) the judgement of these others, or (ii) to oppose this 'judgement of others' either actively through some group, association, or movement (political, social, religious) or individually, with there being the possibility that some so opposing this 'judgement of others' may resort to using violent means against the established order." [3]

In the way of pathei-mathos authority is personal, based on individual empathy and a personal pathei-mathos; both of which have a local horizon so that what is

"beyond our personal empathic knowing of others, beyond our knowledge and our experience [our pathei-mathos], beyond the limited (local) range of our empathy and that personal (local) knowledge of ourselves which pathei-mathos reveals – is something we rationally, we humbly, accept we do not know and so cannot judge or form a reasonable, a fair, a balanced, opinion about. For empathy, like pathei-mathos, lives within us; manifesting, as both empathy and pathei-mathos do, the always limited nature, the horizon, of our own knowledge and understanding." [4]

In practical terms this means trying to cultivate within ourselves the virtues mentioned by Cicero – self-restraint, dignity, fairness, honesty – and implies we have no concern for or we seek to cultivate no concern for supra-personal hierarchies and supra-personal authority – whether political, religious, or otherwise – and thus move away from, try to distance ourselves from, the consequences of such supra-personal hierarchies and supra-personal authority manifest as the consequences are and have been, throughout our history, in war, prejudice, intolerance, unfairness, extremism, and persecution in the name of some ideology, some religion, or because someone has commanded us to persecute those that they and others have declared are "our" enemies, and which war and persecutions are often, especially in modern times, accompanied by propaganda and lies.

Thus in the case of my Catholic remembering, those soldiers in Ballymurphy and in Derry shot and killed civilians, women included, because those soldiers believed them to be "enemies", because propaganda had dehumanized those enemies; because those soldiers were part of and obeyed a hierarchical, supra-personal, chain-of-command by being there armed and prepared to use deadly force and violence against individuals they did not personally know; and because in the aftermath of those killings, and for years afterwards, they were not honest and hence did not contradict the propaganda stories, the lies, about those events which some of their superiors and others circulated in an attempt to justify such acts of inhumanity.

Yet for me the real tragedy is that events similar to those of my very personal remembering have occurred on a vaster scale millennia after millennia and are still occurring, again on a vaster scale and world-wide, despite us having access to the wisdom of the past, manifest as such wisdom is, for those reared in the West, in the Agamemnon of Aeschylus, in the Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles, in the mythos of Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ' Ἐρινύες [5], in many of the writings of Cicero, in Τὰ εἰς ἑαυτὸν by Marcus Aurelius, in the numinous beauty of Gregorian chant, in the music of JS Bach, and in so many, many, other writers and artists ancient and modern.

Ða sceolde se hearpere weorðan swa sarig
þæt he ne meahte ongemong oðrum mannum bion
(XXXV, 6)

David Myatt
9.ix.18

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[1] M. Tullius Cicero, *Pro Murena Oratio*, 23. My translation.

[2] By 'society' in the context of this essay and the way of pathei-mathos is meant a collection of individuals who dwell, who live, in a particular area and who are subject to the same laws and the same institutions of authority. Modern society is thus a manifestation of some State, and States are predicated on individuals actively or passively accepting some supra-personal authority, be it governmental (national) or regional (county), or more usually both.

[3] "Society, Politics, Social Reform, and Pathei-Mathos". *The Numinous Way Of Pathei-Mathos*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf>

[4] "Personal Reflexions On Some Metaphysical Questions." 2015. <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2015/03/11/personal-reflexions-on-some-metaphysical-questions/>

[5] "Trimorphed Moirai with their ever-heedful Furies." Aeschylus (attributed), *Prometheus Bound*, 516

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